

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR Bobby Jindal

STATE OF LOUISIANA

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Governor Jindal Meets With Congressional Delegation to Discuss Priorities

BATON ROUGE – Today, Governor Bobby Jindal met with several members of Louisiana's congressional delegation, including Senator Mary Landrieu, Senator David Vitter, Representative Rodney Alexander, Representative Charles Boustany and Representative Steve Scalise, to discuss the priorities that the delegation will pursue in partnership with the new Congress and the incoming Administration.

The issues discussed by Governor Jindal and the delegation included ongoing disaster recovery efforts, coastal restoration efforts, health care improvements, FEMA reforms and supporting the state's energy industry.

Governor Jindal said, "Assistance for our agriculture industry and fisheries continues to be one of our top priorities. Despite the hundreds of millions of dollars in damage and crop losses, there have been no funds directly allocated within the most recent disaster supplemental bill.

"Also, we are asking that Congress grant Louisiana full federal cost share for Hurricane Gustav, as they did for Hurricane Katrina and the White House did for Hurricane Ike. Hurricanes Gustav and Ike happened within days of each other and it makes no sense to ask local governments to figure out which storm caused what damage just to fill out more paperwork and face additional expenses. No state has experienced such catastrophic losses in such a short period of time. Our people need this support to get back on their feet."

Governor Jindal also said he is working with the delegation to speed up the use of oil and gas royalties for coastal erosion projects. Current legislation will allow Louisiana to keep a larger portion of the federal royalties generated off its coast, with the share increasing in 2017.


"Resources are needed in the short-term," said Governor Jindal. "Hurricanes Katrina and Rita exposed vulnerabilities in our coastal areas. Hurricanes Gustav and Ike emphasized the need to act quickly to improve the sustainability of our coastal communities."

Additionally, Governor Jindal said the delegation will work with the Army Corps of Engineers to encourage the beneficial use of sediment dredged from navigation channels in South Louisiana so that it can be utilized to restore coastal wetlands. Currently, 90 percent of the sediment is dumped into the Gulf of Mexico and not used for any restoration projects.

Governor Jindal also called for the accelerated use of funding already approved to restore Louisiana's coastal areas. The Governor said, "The WRDA bill already authorized the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane protection project for Terrebonne Parish and part of Lafourche Parish. Despite congress's actions, the Corps of Engineers continues to delay implementation of this project, which we need to address immediately. Congress has authorized many coastal restoration projects, including Morganza to the Gulf, and we need to cut the red tape and speed up this work. We cannot wait any longer. Louisiana loses one football field of land every 38 minutes."



On health care, Governor Jindal said he will work with the delegation in partnership with the incoming administration to fix the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage (FMAP) calculation, which currently reduces federal assistance based on the one-time increase in economic activity that typically occurs after natural disasters like Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. This change will cost the state hundreds of millions of additional state general funds in the next fiscal year.



Governor Jindal also noted that Louisiana is currently seeking a waiver from the federal government, part of which includes reducing the \$771 million in disallowances the federal government alleges the state owes and instead using some of that money to improve Louisiana's health care system.

Governor Jindal and the delegation also discussed the federal reimbursement the state is owed for damage to Charity Hospital in New Orleans. Governor Jindal said, "We are owed \$491 million for damage to the hospital and the state deserves to receive this full amount in accordance with the Stafford Act."

Further, the Governor said that reforming FEMA's project scope requirements is critical to addressing major rebuilding challenges from the hurricanes. Currently, the state and localities cannot bid on a project until they know how much repair work FEMA will consider eligible for reimbursement. Many of the projects that state and local government work with FEMA to do scope realignment on are eventually increased as much as 25 percent and the gap between what FEMA has approved for projects and how much they cost has now grown to \$1.4 billion.

Governor Jindal said, "More than 4,000 projects still in dispute three years after the storms of 2005 is not acceptable. We will demand that FEMA establish an expedited appeals process so our local communities can finish rebuilding their schools, police and fire stations."

Governor Jindal also noted that reforms to FEMA must include working to preposition supplies in preparation for the future hurricanes. During Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, FEMA was unable to adequately replenish commodities, including food, water and tarps.

The Governor said, "Moving forward, FEMA must preposition adequate commodities in Louisiana to ensure commodities can be quickly moved to impacted areas. FEMA should also arrange prior contracts and work to partner with local private industries to disperse meals more quickly. The state did this in response to Hurricanes Gustav and Ike at a lower cost per meal than FEMA delivering MREs. Partnering with the private sector can save valuable time during a disaster and taxpayer money."

On energy issues, the Governor said he will continue to work with the delegation, Congress and the new administration to pursue policies that support Louisiana's critical oil and gas industry and the state's emerging alternative energy projects, including those focused on the creation of nuclear, bio-diesel, ethanol, and other renewable energy sources.

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